

FRONTLINES

§1

A WINDOW INTO AMERICA'S UNIVERSITIES

NOVEMBER 2016

FACULTY COMMONS-A CRU MINISTRY

1 Steadfast. Immovable.

The *therefore* that undergirds faculty and graduate student ministry. §1

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The surprising local influence enjoyed by faculty members at WWU. §2

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Dr. Heather Holleman invites readers to live in the fortress of God's guarding care. §4

Steadfast. Immovable.

Rick Hove, Faculty Commons Executive Director



I rarely use the word “therefore” in daily conversation. My son won't

hear, “The grass is overgrown; therefore will you cut it?” nor my wife, “Today is Tuesday; therefore I will take the trash to the street.”

Though I seem to eschew the word “therefore” in daily interactions, in reality the notion of *therefore* undergirds every conversation.

There is a triune God who has created (and creates), who has spoken (and speaks) and is active in the world, carrying it along to eventual judgment and restoration. *Therefore*...

All of life is shaped by this *therefore*.

I write these words after our national election. Millions are disheartened or elated, all are shocked, and no one claims to know what lies ahead. Yet we do know this: there is a sovereign God who rules and reigns; *therefore* we can trust Him.

Those who hope in Christ, in the midst of the tumult, can run to Him as a “sure and steadfast anchor” (Hebrews 6:19). The sovereign God rules the world; *therefore* we find ballast in the keel of the sailboat of every election.

This *therefore* also undergirds our call to faculty and graduate student ministry.

In 1 Corinthians 15 the apostle Paul begins by reminding the Corinthians of the gospel: “Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved” (15:1).

And at the heart of this gospel is the resurrection, which results in this magnificent mystery: “Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed” (15:51-52).

Then Paul concludes: “*Therefore*, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (15:58).

Because the dead will be raised, and all will be changed, *therefore* be “steadfast, immovable, and abounding in the work of the Lord” at the great universities of the world.

Because every student will become like his



New Grad Summer Mission | May 20-June 11, 2017

To launch graduate student movements everywhere, we will host a three-week Grad Summer Mission this summer at Penn State. Grad students will be equipped to help build a Christian movement on their campus. A highlight will include participation in an intensive leadership development conference on the battlefields

of Gettysburg led by Dr. Jay Lorenzen.

Following the mission, students will stay connected to one another and grad ministry staff for ongoing coaching. Email ashley.holleman@cru.org for additional information.

teacher (Luke 6:40), *therefore* be steadfast and immovable, seeking to raise Christ-following professors to lead these classrooms.

Because so much of America, and the world, is “downstream” of America's universities, *therefore* be steadfast and immovable in seeking to establish a Christian voice in these strategic places.

Because truth has consequences, and people matter, and America's universities hold the promise to play a huge role in God's gospel plan for the world, *therefore* be steadfast and

immovable in seeking to build movements of Christian professors at every university.

When we are tempted to be faint of heart, to slip down the path that is least resistant, may the *therefore* flowing from God's story arrest our flight.

Be steadfast. Immovable.

Thank you for standing with us on America's university campuses. †

Executive Director of Faculty Commons, Rick Hove and his wife Sonya live in Durham, NC and have three adult children.

§2

To the Campus and Beyond

Ministry Profile: Dr. Geri Forsberg, Senior Communications Instructor and Faculty Commons Representative, Western Washington University



A decade ago, when Dr. Geri Forsberg invited local pastors from the Bellingham, Washington area to lunch on campus, they weren't sure what to think.

Viewing Western Washington University as a “liberal and atheistic university on the hill,” they were surprised to learn that there was a Western Christian Faculty Forum (WCFF). As the ministers gathered at the Faculty-Pastor Luncheon, they realized that they did not know much about the university, nor did they know many of their fellow pastors.

Geri, faculty member and Faculty Commons representative, helped establish the ministry at WWU in 1999. In the ensuing 17 years, God developed a vibrant, committed and influential group of about 70 faculty and staff. Through monthly brown bag lunches, annual guest lectures, regular prayer times, book studies, and potluck dinners, the WCFF equips, encourages, and challenges faculty to fulfill their unique role as Christ-followers on campus.

The eight steering committee professors have each given their testimony to student groups. That means that they have shared with thousands of students over the years. Dr. David Nelson remembers speaking to a student ministry group in the spring of 2000. When the students expressed surprise that there were Christian professors on campus, Dr. Nelson's reaction was, “Shame on us as Christian faculty for hiding so well so long.” Today the WCFF is well known on campus and

in the community.

The annual Faculty-Pastor Luncheon began at WWU as an informative gathering to communicate what God was doing on campus through the faculty and student ministries. At first, the pastors were startled to see so many professors of faith who desired to make Christ known. Pastor Paul Petersen of Bellingham Covenant Church views this luncheon as a great encouragement and eye-opening exposure to how God is working there. Pastor Petersen has been involved with the faculty ministry at WWU for ten years and has witnessed the unity it has spawned among the local pastors.

Currently 70-80 pastors and faculty attend the annual fall luncheon. What began as an event to inform the community, God has used to begin something new. After meeting at the luncheon, the pastors began to gather regularly for encouragement and prayer, recently



West coast professors enthusiastically consider ways to influence the university and surrounding community for Christ.

resulting in a time of reconciliation between denominations. Many now readily respond and work together for WCFF outreach events such as conferences and annual lectures on campus and in the community. They pray, promote the events in church, and provide needed logistical assistance on the day of the event.

Currently the WWU faculty, student min-

istry leaders, local pastors, and community members in Bellingham collaborate to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is still relevant. “Geri is the ‘spark plug’ to energize this effort,” explains Dr. David Nelson.

Pastor Petersen adds, “Geri is unashamed of the gospel. Her boldness and passion are the catalyst bringing these groups together.” †

Western Washington University

Founded as the State Normal School for teachers in 1893, it became Western Washington University in 1977. WWU's goal is to build a stronger Washington by being an international leader in active learning, critical thinking, and societal problem solving.

- 15,332 students, 95% are undergraduates
- Among top producers nationally of Fulbright Scholarships in 2015 with five winners
- U.S. News and World Report's (2017) top master's granting institution in the Pacific Northwest
- Ranks among Kiplinger's “100 Best Values in Public Colleges for 2016”



Wade King Student Recreation Center at Western Washington University. Photo: opsis architecture website.

10,000 and Counting

Faculty Profile: Bill Fiess, Mathematics Professor, *Southwest Virginia Community College*



At the end of every semester, math professor Bill Fiess tells his students about the October afternoon during his freshman year that changed his life.

On a Saturday afternoon, while his roommate was out of town, Bill had time to reflect on his life.

He didn't like what he saw.

"I was a very driven person; I always wanted to win," he tells his students now. "My whole perspective had been very selfish."

"I remember praying to God and confessing my sins to Him in a very specific way and knowing that God had forgiven them," he continues. "And then things changed in my life. I realized for the first time that I didn't have to win. Because I knew I had everything in Jesus Christ. It was a relief!"

More than 10,000 students have heard Bill tell this story during his 42 years as a math professor at Southwest Virginia Community College (SWVCC). He also gives each student an evangelistic booklet called, "You Can Be Eternally Secure," with a dollar attached to it to demonstrate that eternal life is free.

This has an impact because by the time they

hear Bill's story, his students already know his character. He has served them well as a teacher, even taking calls at home to answer questions.

One of Bill's statistics students, Billie Keene, says Bill radiated a spirit of love, joy, peace, and patience in class every day. With a full-time job and a family at home, Billie used to stay up till midnight or later each night to finish her homework, and statistics was a daunting challenge.

But Bill encouraged her: "Have faith. You will do well, and I will pray for you." She finished near the top of the class and has gone on to be a professor at SWVCC herself.

In 1979, Bill contacted Cru staff member Earle Chute and asked for help in launching a Cru student ministry at SWVCC. After 36 years, the group is still going strong, and now Earle is helping Bill start a Faculty Commons ministry to professors. His former student, Billie Keene, is one of the group's charter members.

"Bill is an amazing evangelist," Earle says. "He shares Christ with everyone who will listen."

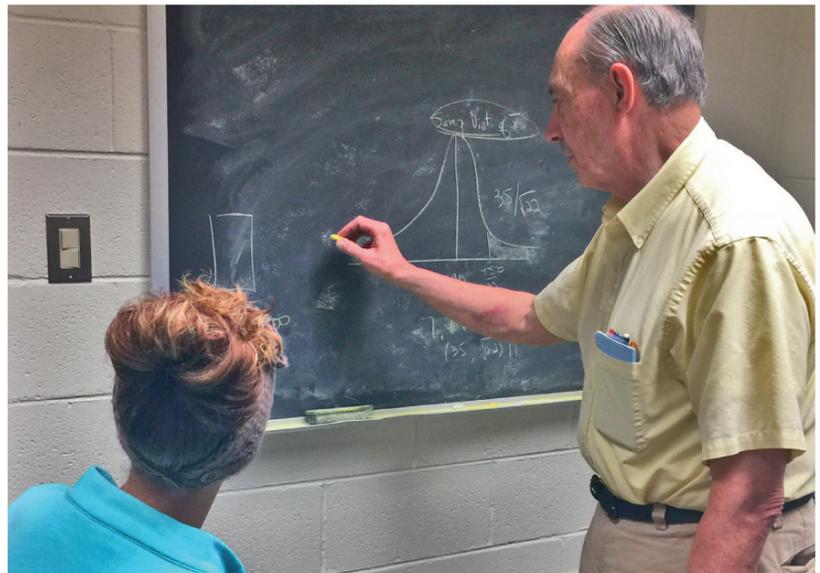
Bill often receives "thank you" emails from grateful students. "I wanted to let you know that you really hit hard with me on the last day

of class," one wrote recently. "I read the booklet you gave us entitled, 'You Can Be Eternally Secure,' and began thinking about my life ... I realized that not only did I need to plan for my future financially but also spiritually."

Only God knows how many of Bill Fiess's 10,000+ students will be with Christ in eternity. But because of this faithful professor, they all know how to get there. †

Nilson Award Winner

Bill has been awarded the 2016 Erick B. Nilson award which Faculty Commons gives annually to an outstanding Christian professor. This award is named for agronomy professor Erick Nilson, leader of the faculty ministry at Kansas State University in the 1980's. Following his death in 1990, Dr. Nilson's family set aside funds for Faculty Commons to annually recognize "the men and women of God that He is raising up to forward His cause at the university."



Bill Fiess, beloved math professor at Southwest Virginia Community College, tells every student how Jesus changed his life during his freshman year in college. He also gives countless hours of assistance to help his students do their best.

Join with us in Prayer

Urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. – 1 Timothy 2:1-2

1. Pray for God to heal our country following the election.
2. Pray for the January 2017 launch of Faculty Commons' new book *A Grand Story: An Invitation to Christian Professors*. Pray God would use it to encourage and equip Christian professors around the world.

A Common Call Conferences for Christian Faculty

"These regional conferences give us a great opportunity to meet colleagues and learn strategies that are practical to use to make an eternal impact on our campuses."

– Dr. Phil Bishop; Professor Emeritus, Kinesiology, University of Alabama; Professor, Liberty University

- Orlando, FL February 10–11
- Greenville, SC February 10–11
- Moscow, ID May 13
- Athens, GA February 24–25
- Palo Alto, CA April 8

See acommoncall.org for registration information

§4 Guarded by Christ: Knowing the God Who Rescues and Keeps Us

Author's perspective: Dr. Heather Holleman, Lecturer, English, *Penn State University*

I love strong verbs, and God used one to change my life.

Last year, I read Psalm 97:10: "God guards the lives of His faithful ones." I stared at that little verb "guards" and wondered so many things: How is God guarding us? Where is He guarding us? Why is He guarding us? How could I daily experience His guarding care?

And finally: How do I think about God's guarding care when life falls apart?

This firestorm of urgent questions sent me on a journey to explore what it means that we live guarded by Christ. A book proposal quick-

ly formed as I imagined this new guarded-by-Christ mindset; we live guarded by righteousness, peace, hope, power, and as crucified with Christ. These five privileges of being a child of God were internal, spiritual realities that finally helped me understand why suffering Christians can make statements like "It is well with my soul," or "I have learned the secret of being content in all circumstances."

Mature Christians live more from their inner beings than from their external realities, and I reasoned that people who knew God's guarding care like this would have maturity, emotional stability, and an inner strength I still longed for but never seemed to possess.

I wanted to be like the woman in Proverbs 31:25 who is "clothed in strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come." I wanted to be like the person described in Psalm 112:8 who "has no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord." Finally, I wanted to be like the one described in James 1:4 who is "mature and complete, not lacking anything."

But I wasn't mature and complete. I was more immature and unstable. How could I live in the reality of God's guarding care and be "strengthened in my inner being" like Paul prays for us in Ephesians 3? I knew that learning to dwell in the truth of God's presence in my soul would help me grow up in the Lord. What I found most helpful was to organize scripture in ways I could remember—with alliteration, visual reminders, and single pas-

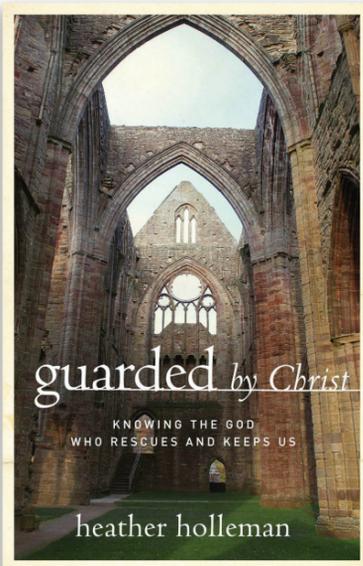
sages to cue all the things I wanted to remember about Jesus' guarding care.

I loved writing this book, especially since it deals with my journey through anxiety and depression in my mid-twenties and thirties. I was thrilled to now proclaim God's peace and hope in my soul even if my mind wasn't—and sometimes still isn't—always healthy. What a difference it has made to think about my soul as kept by Jesus even during bad moods, stress, or a

possible return of depression or anxiety!

I hope you enjoy this new book and might use it for discipleship material and Bible study, especially for women who have trouble managing distressing emotions, hard circumstances, and a fear of the future.

Guarded by Christ invites readers to live from what is true of their souls at all times and connect deeply with Jesus there, even if life falls apart on the outside. †



Investing in the Mission

Your financial investment will help us build movements of professors and students to take the hope of Jesus Christ to the world. Will you prayerfully consider partnering with us in this vital endeavor? All contributions to Faculty Commons are income tax deductible.

Cash donations

Make check payable to Cru and mail to Faculty Commons; 2001 W. Plano Parkway, Suite 2700; Plano, Texas 75075. Or invest online: give.cru.org/2271527

Maximize your giving to help reach the world for Christ

Stocks, bonds and mutual funds held for at least a year, which have increased in value since the time purchased, will receive extra tax savings when used as a donation.

Donor Advised Funds

You can make a gift of cash or appreciated assets into a Donor Advised Fund, receive an immediate tax deduction, then plan for future giving. Cru's Great Commission Foundation can show you the tax and cash flow benefits.

If you need assistance, please contact our Director of Ministry Development, Rich McGee at 214-727-6084 or rich.mcgee@facultycommons.org.



A higher standard. A higher purpose.

Support Faculty Commons Staff Members

As part of Cru, all of our staff members trust God for their salary and ministry expenses. You can contribute to individuals at give.cru.org by typing their names in the search box.

Fast Facts:

Four grad students at *Rice University*, who had been involved in Cru as undergraduates, are helping launch a Grad Student Ministry on campus this fall.

Christian faculty and Cru students at *Ocean County College* launched a faculty fellowship group this fall by participating in a "prayer walk" on this New Jersey campus.

Penn State Acoustics Professor Dan Russell and his wife love students and invited Dan's grad students to their home for the Vikings-Packers game to build relationships.

At the *University of Wisconsin—River Falls* God has raised up a new faculty advisor who said, "I don't want to just sign papers but to do ministry!"



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